

Episode #733 Matthew 8 Part 1-The Centurion's Servant

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. Having finished His great teaching session to His disciples commonly called “The Sermon on the Mount,” the Lord now continues His ministry, and works many miracles. He made a leper clean with a touch, and then sent him to testify to the priests. Today we continue to study some of these miracles and the lessons we can learn from them in Matthew 8.

III. Healing the Centurion's Servant.

- A. Verse 5. A centurion was a Roman officer, commander of a hundred soldiers. Yet we should not just consider him a captain. He had a hundred men under him, but in a faraway outpost like Israel he was as a rule the top authority. Pleading = *parakaleo*, in this case asking Him to come alongside to help, rather than doing it himself.
- B. Verse 6. Servant is *pais*, young man. Perhaps some kind of attendant, beloved by his master. In Luke 7:1-10 the centurion asks about a *doulos*, a slave, but that appears to be a later incident, perhaps with the same man. He says he is *paralutikos*, paralyzed, at least on one side. The slave in Luke 7 was ready to die, but not this one. “Dreadfully tormented” or severely tried or tested, Greek *basanizo*. A *basanos* was a touchstone used to test metal. This was a thorough and revealing test. Later, the Romans would “test” prisoners by torture, so the word came to have that meaning. Here both meanings would fit.
- C. Verse 7. “I” is emphatic. He is agreeing to come. This was a bold thing to do, to go to the house of one of the occupying force of the Romans at that! Most Jews would not have had the slightest compunction against murdering such a man if they had opportunity. Back then entering a man's house showed fellowship, friendship, and sympathy. You were duty-bound to protect him and vice-versa. The Lord's enemies would have called Him a traitor from then on.
- D. Verse 8. In Luke 7 an embassy came from the centurion, and he himself was not present. Here, though, the man is present to immediately answer for himself. Bullinger says he means he was not “fit” socially. The Lord could be considered a collaborator for doing this to a Roman.
- E. Verse 9. He has *exousia*, delegated authority. Of course, he got it from Rome. The Lord got His authority from His Father. This demonstrated his great faith: that the Lord could heal at a distance. He believed He could do it by just speaking a word.
- F. Verse 10. There are only two things the Lord marveled at: great faith (here) and lack of faith (Mark 6:6). Many came to Him for healing, but this man believed the Lord could act just as powerfully from a distance as He could when present.
- G. Verse 11. East and west = from the sun-rising and the sun-setting. Here He says kingdom of the heavens, in Luke 13:28 the kingdom of God. Are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to sit down in two different kingdoms? No; surely not. These are the same.
- H. Verse 12. The sons are the representatives of the kingdom. In this case it probably means those who currently had governmental power, the religious leaders, His enemies.

1. The common interpretation is to make the many from east and west to be Gentiles, and the sons of the kingdom to be Jews. Yet even as Christ spoke these words the Jews were scattered far from Israel east and west.
 2. "Outer darkness" occurs three times, only in Matthew. "The darkness the outer," very emphatic. This is outside the kingdom, but it is not a place. Speaks poetically of the very darkness of death.
 3. Greek "the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." Bullinger = not a state but a definite occasion. They do this when they realize they are going to be cast into the outer darkness.
 4. Gnashing of teeth = great regret, or utter repudiation, Acts 7:54.
- I. Verse 13. "Go your way" means "go about your business." Whatever else he had to accomplish, he should do it, and worry about this matter no longer. This is a Biblical healing. No tent pitched, choir readied, or emotions worked up. The Lord just speaks the word and it is done.

V. Conclusion: The centurion who came to the Lord for healing demonstrated great faith, more than that the Lord had found in Israel. He believed the Lord could speak the word at a distance, and that was all it would take for Him to heal. The Lord marveled at this man's faith, showing how unusual it was. Do we likewise believe that the Lord can work just as powerfully at a distance as He can when present? Can we demonstrate the kind of faith this man did?